

Picchetti Winery
13100 Montebello Road
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space Park District
Cupertino
Santa Clara County
California

HABS No. CA-2012

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS NO. CA-2012

PICCHETTI WINERY

Location: 13100 Montebello Road, Mid-Peninsula Open Space
District, Cupertino, Santa Clara County, California.

USGS Cupertino Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 10.580710.4127770.

Present Owner: The Mid-Peninsula Open Space District.

Significance: The Picchetti Winery was one of the early wineries in the area and is significant for its historical association with the agricultural heritage of the Santa Clara Valley. Containing much of its early outbuildings and machinery, the winery complex provides a vivid picture of the industry in the late nineteenth century. The winery was owned by the Picchetti family until 1976, and was operated as a winery for seventy-two years.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection:
 - a. The Old House, circa 1882.
 - b. The House: 1886 (Reese, Bob. "History of the Wineries #1467," Unpublished draft of report, California History Center, DeAnza College, hereafter referred to as "Reese.")
 - c. Winery: 1896.
 - d. Outbuildings: 1900-22, including fermenting and pressing house, blacksmith shop, stable, garage and wash house.
2. Architect: No information available.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Sometime between 1872 and 1882, Picchetti brothers, Vincenzo and Secondo, bought 160 acres on Montebello ridge for \$1,500 (Reese). Secondo and his wife moved to the ridge and began clearing the land and planting grapes. In 1884, Secondo sold his half interest in the acreage to Vincenzo (Reese), who subsequently bought surrounding properties which totaled 500 acres at the time of his death in 1904 (Lisa Beard, "The Pioneer Picchetti Family of Cupertino." Unpublished report, page 4, California History Center DeAnza College, 1973, hereafter referred to as "Beard"). Among these purchases was 100 acres owned by Dr. Ozea Perrone and located on the lower half of the ridge. Vincenzo later

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sold his 100 acres to John Alves in 1950 (Mitchell, Mary. "Montebello Ridge." Unpublished report, page 1, California History Center, De Anza College, 1972, hereafter referred to as "Mitchell.") The Picchetti property was purchased by what is now the Mid-Penninsula Open Space District in 1976.

4. Alterations and Additions:

- a. The Old House: The first floor front of the house, beneath the stairway, was screened in for the birds that John Picchetti kept. John was known for his love of birds and animals (interview with Irene and Josephine Picchetti). A second entrance door was added to the left side of the house and an inside door, on the first floor connecting the two sides of the house, was closed off in the mid- 1950's. This modification was made in order to provide privacy for the two ranch hands who lived there. The bathroom was added about 1960-1963; prior to that time, two outhouses were used. At one time, a brick oven for baking bread stood in front of the house. The area at the left side of the house was used for washing wine barrels (Interview, Irene Picchetti), and one room of the house was used as storage for gallon wine jugs (Telephone interview with Tisch and Elio Picchetti). The Old House was later used as an office.
- b. The House: Originally, the entrance road led up the hill to the east side of the house which was the original front of the house. At some time prior to 1892 the driveway was altered and entry to the property was from the southwest side of the house, making the south entrance to the house the principal entrance. The entire house was already in its present condition by 1904. A huge oak tree once stood on the east side of the house where the existing arbor is and shaded that side of the house. A fish pond is located there. (Interview, Irene Picchetti). The formal dining room was used as an office beginning about 1912-1915 (Interview, Tisch Picchetti). The black and nickeled Monarch wood-burning cook stove was installed some years after the house was built in 1886 (Tole, unpublished report).
- c. Wash Rooms: A brick oven was used to bake bread here. It was removed (circa 1948-1953) and a wood-burning stove was installed. At a still later date, a butane stove was substituted. The stove was used to process fruit (Interview, Tisch Picchetti).
- d. Bird Aviaries: John Picchetti loved birds and animals, and there were once several bird aviaries below the old house along the road. One of the aviaries still exists.
- e. The Big Yellow Barn: The yellow barn was built about the same time as the main house and was originally intended to be another residence for one of the sons (Interview, Tisch Picchetti). The barn was located west of the stable, with a large corral between

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the two structures. Because the roof was in a state of disrepair, the barn was torn down after the property was purchased by the Mid-Penninsula Open Space District. The upper floor of the barn was used for storage of hay and lower portion for the milking of cows. There was a shed, apparently added after the barn was built, in which the cows could take cover from the weather. In front of the shed was a corral for the cows with a pig pen in the lower right section of it. The corral southeast of the barn was for horses and contained a large wooden hay feeder and watering trough.

- f. Chicken House: North of the barn and west of the garage and main house, the large chicken house was located under a willow tree. Several pens were located in this area for pigeons and other fowl. None of these structures exist.
- g. Cutting Shed, Dehydrator, Shed for dipping prunes, Sulfur House for apricots, etc: West of the main house, was an area consisting of several sheds and equipment for processing dried fruits, primarily prunes and apricots. Behind these was a large clearing for drying trays. All of this has been demolished.
- h. Garage: The garage was divided into four areas. The north end of the garage was used as a wood shed and the entrance was completely open to that section. After the Mid-Penninsula Open Space District purchased the property, the entrance was enclosed and a door added. The area next to the wood shed was used for automobiles. The room adjoining this was used for storing tractors and other farm equipment. The room at the south end of the building was a storage room for chicken feed, tools, saddles, etc. There was a pot-belly stove in this room until about 1973. Once a year a pig was killed, salami made and hung in this room to cure before being transferred to the basement of the house for storage.
- i. Stable: At one time, a room located to the north side of the stable was used as a bedroom for working men; later it was used as a tack room. There is also an addition to the southwest corner of the stable.
- j. Bocce Ball Court: This Court runs the full length of the north end of the winery and fermenting rooms and was the main source of entertainment for the working men (Cupertino-Monta Vista Courier, Volume 27, Number 11, November 14, 1973). It was later used as a rifle shooting area for target practice.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure: Vincenzo Picchetti came to the Santa Clara Valley from Italy in 1872 at the age of twenty-four (Tole, page 1). For the next ten years, he worked as the foreman of the vineyards and winery of the Villa Maria for Jesuit Fathers, located below Stevens Creek (this land is now known as Villa Maria Park). Some time during his ten years at the Villa Maria,

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Vincenzo sent for his brother, Secondo, in Italy, and together they purchased 160 acres of land on the western Montebello slopes, overlooking Arroyo de San Joseph Cupertino (Beard, page 3). In 1889, Frona Eunice Wait described Santa Clara County as "one of the most beautiful and fertile counties in the State. The best wines of Santa Clara are produced from grapes grown upon the eastern side of the valley close up the foothills. The vintage is lighter than that from the western side, but the grapes are finer and wines therefrom have naturally a more delicate flavor." (Wait, Frona Eunice. Wines and Vines of California, A Treatise on the Ethics of Wine-Drinking, 1889, p. 192).

Secondo and his wife moved to the western slopes of Santa Clara Valley and began clearing the land (circa, 1879) and the old house was built. About 1882, Vincenzo returned to Italy to marry Teresa, the girl he left behind, and when he returned, he continued working at Villa Maria for several more years (Cupertino Chronicle, Vol. 19, 1975, page 15). In 1884, Secondo sold his half interest in the acreage to Vincenzo. With Secondo's departure to San Jose, Vincenzo, Teresa and their newly born son moved to their ranch house (the "Old House"). Working men were boarded on the second floor until the present main house was built in 1886 (Interview, Irene Picchetti). In 1888, Mrs. Picchetti's sister, Louisa, arrived from Italy to assist with raising the children and chores (Reese). The ranch was like a miniature park with chickens, geese, ducks, pigeons, pheasants, peacocks, sheep, hogs, cattle, deer, raccoon, canaries, and a wild badger. In the grounds around the home were orange, lemon, and pomegranate trees. There is a lake on the property which used to be full year around but since the 1906 earthquake, it is dry during the summer months (Tole, page 5).

The young vineyards of Zinfandels, Carignane, Petite Sirah for red clarets, and Golden Shasta for White Sauternes which the Picchettis planted, became mature and began producing. The produce was sold in bulk to local wineries until about 1896, when the two-story red brick winery was built into the side of a hill at the upper end of the main yard. A creek ran directly behind the winery and was used in the production of the wine (Reese). The wine was bottled and sold under the label "Picchetti Bros." Irene Picchetti still has one of the original labels which reads as follows:

"Alcoholic strength 1 Gal
12 to 14% by volume
California Sauterne Wine
Produced and Bottled by
PICCHETTI BROS.
Rt. 1, Box 820, Cupertino, Ca.
Bonded Winery No. 148
14th Adm. Dist. Calif."
"Tax Paid by stamps affixed to Case"

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The Wine Institute of San Francisco lists the Picchetti winery as Bonded Winery No. 148. It was considered a small family winery with wines that were frequently of outstanding quality and always distinctive in flavor. Unlike many mass-produced wines, the Picchetti wines aged naturally for at least three years, a process generally used to create finer wines. "They created a wine that was still alive and produced a sediment in the bottle which did not affect the flavor" (Beard, page 8). Elio Picchetti, grandson of Vincenzo, reputedly still holds the recipes for the wines (Tole). The lower area of the winery is still filled with redwood storage wine tanks and oak casks for aging. Just inside the cellar is a large wine cask which was imported from Europe to be exhibited at the St. Louis Exposition of 1904. It is hand carved with grapes and legends connected with wine making. Only the grapes and leaves remain visible, however, because the legends have been painted over.

A brandy still was located in the Blacksmith Shop and operated until Prohibition (Interview, Irene Picchetti).

The Garage, probably the latest building built on the property, was constructed from lumber taken from the barracks at Camp Fremont (Interview, Tisch Picchetti).

Vincenzo and Teresa raised four sons: Antone, born 1882, John, born 1888, Attilio, and Hector (Beard, page 4). After Vincenzo's death in 1904 at age 56, Antone and John took over the management of the ranch. Attilio and Hector opened a livery stable which later became the first Nash Automobile Agency in San Jose (Cupertino Chronicle). Virgil Picchetti, grandson of Vincenzo, was killed while serving in the European theatre in World War II. The post for the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Cupertino is named after him (Crist, page 2).

The Picchettis were instrumental in planning for the Montebello School, which was constructed in 1892, and contributed \$250 for its construction. Vincenzo served on the first board of trustees and supplied a room for the teacher at his ranch. Since its inception, the school board has always had a Picchetti member (Cupertino Chronicle, page 16).

During Prohibition, the brothers were forced to sell acres of vineyards to meet expenses, and when Prohibition was rescinded the Picchettis could not afford to update their equipment to meet the new government standards and compete with the corporate wineries. Added to this was the modernization of farming techniques requiring expensive mechanization. This resulted in the end of the Picchetti winemaking for commercial market, although they still continued producing for their own use. In 1963, they stopped making wine (The Wines of America, Leon D. Adams, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1973) and by 1971 the winery was closed after seventy-two years of operation. (Cupertino Chronicle, page 18). The family boarded

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horses and slowly sold off the acreage they once tilled (Butler, The Valley of Santa Clara Historic Buildings 1792-1920, page 115). It is now owned by Mid-Penninsula Open Space District which purchased it in 1976.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Secondary and published sources:

Adams, Leon D., The Wines of America, Boston, 1973.

Butler, Phyllis Filiberti, Valley of Santa Clara Historic Buildings: 1792-1920, San Jose, 1975.

Cupertino Chronicle. Local History Studies. Vol. 19. California History Center DeAnza College, 1975.

Cupertino-Monta Vista Courier, Vol. 27, No. 11, November 14, 1973.

Garrod, R. V., The Saratoga Story, 1962.

Wait, Eunice, Wines and Vines of California, A Treatise on the Ethics of Wine Drinking, 1889.

2. Primary and unpublished sources:

Beard, Lisa. "The Pioneer Picchetti Family of Cupertino." Unpublished Report, California History Center, DeAnza College, 1973.

Crist, Rosemary, "Montebello Ridge: Its Vineyards and Wineries." Unpublished Report, California History Center. DeAnza College, 1974.

Mitchell, Mary. "Montebello Ridge." Unpublished Report, California History Center, DeAnza College, 1972.

Reese, Bob. "History of the Wineries #1467." Unpublished draft of report, California History Center, DeAnza College.

Tole, Raymond. "The Picchetti Family." Unpublished report, California History Center, DeAnza College, 1973.

3. Interviews:

Interview with Irene Picchetti and Josephine Picchetti, August 1978, at the home of Irene Picchetti (Mrs. Andrew H. Tedesco), 345 S. Genevieve Lane, San Jose, CA.

Telephone interview with Tisch and Elio Picchetti, August 1978.

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4. Photographs: There is an excellent collection of Photographs in the possession of Irene Picchetti.

Prepared by Robert Brueggmann
Project Supervisor
HABS

Summer 1978

PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the County of Santa Clara. The 1978 summer project, the second year of a three-year project in Santa Clara County, was completed under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS; Kenneth L. Anderson, Jr., Principal Architect; and Robert Brueggmann, Project Supervisor (University of Illinois, Chicago Circle); with Jack Schafer, Architectural Foreman (University of Cincinnati); and student architects Robert E. Clarke (University of Notre Dame), Barbara M. Friedman (University of Pennsylvania), Julia H. Miner (Yale University), and John B. Murphy (Texas Tech University), at the HABS Field Office in Saratoga, California. The drawings were edited in the HABS Washington Office during the summer of 1979 by architect David T. Marsh. The historical and architectural data was researched and written during the summer of 1979 by Jan Cigliano, an architectural historian on the HABS staff, at the 1979 HABS Field Office in Santa Clara, California. Photographs were taken by Jane Lidz, summer 1980.

ADDENDUM TO
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